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# The **FALL** of **JERUSALEM**



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# Jesus' Prophecy of the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70

Kyle Butt, M.Div.

## Article In Brief...

**While Jesus was on the Earth, everything He predicted about His own life and death came true to the smallest detail. His accuracy extended, however, even beyond His own earthly lifespan to include what would happen to the Jewish nation and the city of Jerusalem in the future. The secular, historical record of events that led to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 perfectly matches Jesus' detailed prophecy. The take-away lesson from this study is that Jesus is God the Son and always speaks the truth. In light of this fact, all people should be preparing and watching for His Second Coming.**

While Jesus was on Earth, He performed amazing miracles that verified His claim to be the Son of God. He often used these miracles as legitimate evidence that would lead any reasonable person to conclude that He was Who He declared Himself to be. He presented a challenge to those who disbelieved: "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (John 10:37-38). Jesus' proposal was simple: if He accomplished things that mere mortals could not do, then He must be Who He claimed to be. One such evidence of Jesus' divinity was the fact that He often predicted the future. Many times those predictions had to do with immediate events that would occur within a brief time after He made the predictions, such as His own capture by the Jews and His death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21),

or the establishment of the Church after His ascension (Matthew 16:18; Acts 1:4-8). One of Jesus' most profound and easily verified predictions, however, had to do with events that would occur years after His time on Earth. With meticulous detail, Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, an event that took place almost four decades after His ascension. Not only does this prophecy verify His deity, it adds another powerful piece of evidence to the case for the inspiration of the Bible.

### JESUS' PREDICTION

Even the most casual reader of the Gospel accounts in the New Testament quickly discovers that the majority of the Jewish leaders in the first century wanted Jesus dead. In spite of Jesus' healings, teachings about love, sermons on the coming Kingdom of God, and invitations to enjoy God's forgiveness, the Jewish nation, in large part, completely rejected Him. We hear His

heartbroken cry for the capital city of Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation, when He lamented, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37).

The text of Matthew's account of Jesus' life transitions from His sorrow over Jerusalem into an episode when Jesus' disciples wanted to bring their Teacher's attention to the majestic stones and architecture of the "buildings of the temple" (Matthew 24:1). Jesus responded to their fawning over the physical structures of Jerusalem with a startling pronouncement. "Do you not see these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (24:2). Such a declaration from the Christ would have shocked even His most ardent disciples.

First, in the minds of virtually every first-century Jew, the Messiah was supposed to usher in a glorious new Kingdom. "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever" (Isaiah 9:7). Furthermore, this Kingdom surely would have for its seat of government the Holy City, Zion, Jerusalem, as Isaiah predicted, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2). If the Messiah was to reign on the throne of David "forever," and if the center of governmental power was to be in Jerusalem, then foretelling the city's, and especially the Temple's, destruction approached blasphemy.

Second, the actual, physical destruction of Jerusalem seemed virtually impossible to Jesus' hearers,

and for good reason. First-century Jewish historian, Josephus, writing about the stones of the Temple, stated: "Now the outward face of the temple in its front wanted nothing that was likely to surprise either men's minds or their eyes, for it was covered all over with plates of gold of great weight.... Of its stones, some of them were forty-five cubits in length, five in height, and six in breadth."<sup>1</sup> Such massive stones have been estimated to weigh several hundred tons. Furthermore, the towers that adorned and protected the Temple were magnificent in and of themselves. "Now as these towers were so very tall.... The largeness also of the stones was wonderful, for they were not made of common small stones for of such large ones only as men could carry...each stone was twenty cubits in length, and ten in breadth, and five in depth."<sup>2</sup> After all, it had taken over 40 years just to build the Temple (John 2:20). The Roman historian Tacitus was struck by the city's defenses as well. He noted that "the commanding situation of the city had been strengthened by enormous works which would have been a thorough defence even for level ground." He went on to comment that "two hills of great height were fenced in by walls" and "within were other walls surrounding the palace, and rising to a conspicuous height, the tower of Antonia."<sup>3</sup> In view of Jerusalem's excellent military defensive position with a high elevation and massive walls, Jesus' prediction seemed outlandish.

Naturally, such a sweeping statement of destruction piqued the curiosity of the dubious disciples, and they further questioned their Leader, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"<sup>4</sup> In answer to their questions, Jesus proceeded to explain events that His disciples

could identify that would signal the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup>

## I: False Christs and Prophets

In enumerating the events that would precede the fall of Jerusalem, Jesus stated: "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. **See, I have told you before hand**" (Matthew 24:23-25, also 24:5, 11).<sup>6</sup> When we scour the pages of history between the years of A.D. 30 and A.D. 70 we find a host of references that verify Jesus' prophecy.

Josephus wrote: "Theudas persuaded a great part of the people... to follow him...for he told them **he was a prophet**, and that he would by his own command, divide the river and afford them an easy passage over it; and many were deluded by his words."<sup>7</sup> When writing of events that happened during the reign of Felix (A.D. 52-60), he stated: "There was also another body of wicked men gotten together.... These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under **pretense of divine inspiration**...and these prevailed the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness, as pretending that God would show them the signals of liberty."<sup>8</sup> The historian further recorded: "Moreover, there came out of Egypt about this time to Jerusalem, one **that said he was a prophet**.... He said further that... at his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall down."<sup>9</sup> And "there was an Egyptian false prophet...he was a cheat, and **pretended to be a prophet** also."<sup>10</sup> Josephus wrote despairingly of the prevalence of such false prophets when he stated, "Now, as for the affairs of the Jews, they grew worse and worse continually, for the country was again filled with robbers and impostors, **who**

**deluded** the multitude. Yet did Felix catch and put to death many of those **impostors every day**, together with the robbers."<sup>11</sup>

In recording events during these years, Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, stated: "But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was something great, to whom all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the **great power of God**'" (Acts 8:9-10). Origen, who lived from A.D. 185-253, wrote in his book *Contra Celsum*: "And after the times of Jesus, Dositheus the Samaritan also wished to persuade the Samaritans that **he was the Christ** predicted by Moses; and he appears to have gained over some to his views."<sup>12</sup> He further stated that Dositheus proclaimed himself to be "the Son of God."<sup>13</sup> It is evident to all who give this period of history the most casual glance that it was rife with people claiming to be prophets, saviors, and divinely inspired christs.

## 2: Wars and Conflict

Jesus predicted, in no uncertain terms, that prior to the fall of Jerusalem there would be "wars and rumors of wars," and that nation would "rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:6,7; Luke 21:10). While it is true that wars and talk of wars are fairly common, Jesus' prediction corresponds precisely to the worldwide increase in hostilities during the years between A.D. 30 and 70.

Tacitus wrote of the months leading up to A.D. 70 and the strife that raged during this time, when he stated: "I am entering on the history of a period rich in disasters, frightful in its wars, torn by civil strife, and even in peace full of horrors. Four emperors perished by the sword. There were three civil wars; there were more with foreign enemies;



there were often wars that had both characters at once.”<sup>14</sup> In addition, Josephus wrote an entire book titled *The Jewish Wars*, because the various wars, conflicts, and battles that the Jews were involved in during this time literally required an entire volume to document. Jesus’ allusion to wars and strife during this time cannot be gainsaid by even the most ardent skeptic of divine prophecy.

### 3. Famines, Pestilences, and Earthquakes

In answering His disciples’ question about the signs that would precede the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus foretold that there would “be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11). History could not be more abundantly clear that Jesus knew what He was talking about.

When recording events from the year A.D. 51, Tacitus wrote, “This year witnessed many prodigies.... Houses were flattened by repeated **earthquakes**.... Further portents were seen in shortages of corn, resulting in **famine**.... In this year war broke out between Armenians and Iberians, and seriously disturbed relations between Rome and Parthia.”<sup>15</sup> Concerning the years A.D. 65-66, Tacitus wrote:

Heaven, too, marked this crime-stained year with tempest and **pestilence**. Campania was ravaged by a hurricane which destroyed houses, orchards, and crops.... At Rome, a **plague devastated** the entire population. No miasma was discernible in the air. Yet the houses were full of corpses, and the streets of funerals. Neither sex nor age conferred immunity. Slave or free, all succumbed just as suddenly.<sup>16</sup>

Roman historian Suetonius documented that “a series of droughts had caused a scarcity of grain” during the reign of Claudius.<sup>17</sup> Josephus details the story of Helena visiting Jerusalem, stating, “Now her coming was

of very great advantage to the people of Jerusalem, for whereas a **famine** did oppress them at that time, and many people died for want of what was necessary to procure food....”<sup>18</sup> In addition, Acts 11:27-30 records that Agabus, a prophet, foretold of “a great famine throughout all the world,” which severely affected those in Judea.

Seneca the Younger, in writing about a specific earthquake that occurred in the A.D. 60s, stated: “This tremor was on 5 February in the consulship of Regulus and Verginius, and it inflicted devastation on Campania.... For part of the town of Herculaneum too fell down and even the structures that remain are unstable.”<sup>19</sup> Tacitus noted that an “earthquake too demolished a large part of Pompeii.”<sup>20</sup>

One remarkable aspect to all these historical events is the fact that, in reality, we have very little that is recorded about the first century. Yet, what little we do have includes direct verification of exactly what Jesus predicted.

### 4. Persecution of the Disciples

In looking into the future at the trials that His followers would face, Jesus predicted: “But before all these things, they will lay hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake” (Luke 21:12). Those of us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, aware of the persecution experienced by the early Christians, hardly find such a prediction remarkable. In truth, however, the idea that Jews who were former fishermen, tax collectors, and zealots who became followers of a carpenter from Nazareth would be so infamous in secular circles that they would stand before the most politically powerful rulers of the age was a rather bold prediction.

The fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy is so well documented it hardly even needs verification. The book of Acts records this persecution thoroughly. Acts 5:18,40 state: “Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him...and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.... And when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus.” Stephen was murdered in Acts 7. King Herod killed James the brother of John with a sword (Acts 12:2), and proceeded to capture Peter with the obvious intent of doing him harm (12:4). The Jewish leaders brought Paul before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:3). He was then sent to the governor Felix (24:10), then to Festus (24:27), and stood before King Agrippa (24:26).

The early church historian Eusebius stated: “It is therefore recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day.... And that they both suffered martyrdom at the same time is stated by Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in his epistle to the Romans.”<sup>21</sup> Suetonius wrote that during the reign of Nero, “Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief.”<sup>22</sup> And Tacitus added that Nero “inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians.... Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight expired. Nero offered his garden for the spectacle.”<sup>23</sup> Additional testimony

could be added to this, but little need there is for it. Mark it down as historical fact: Christ's followers were subjected to the exact punishments and persecutions predicted by their Lord.

## 5. Jerusalem Surrounded by Armies

In Matthew's account of Jesus' prophecy, he recorded that Jesus said, "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (24:15-16; Mark 13:14-15). Admittedly, the term "abomination of desolation" sounds vague to a 21<sup>st</sup>-century reader. To what does this reference apply? Apparently, from Matthew's parenthetical statement "whoever reads, let him understand," the author was confident that his readers would recognize the situation when it occurred. Since it is generally recognized that Matthew wrote for an early Jewish audience, he could assume that they had an understanding of the prophet Daniel that would help them identify the "abomination of desolation" (Daniel 9:27).

Luke's account, on the other hand, does not leave the warning shrouded in any vagueness. In his parallel passage to Matthew 24, he recorded Jesus as stating, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains..." (Luke 21:10). The context places Luke's statement of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies in the exact place that Matthew positioned Jesus' statement about the "abomination of desolation." Also notice that Luke's account connects the ideas by stating that Jerusalem's "desolation" would be near when the armies surrounded it. Clearly, the "abomination of desolation" and the

surrounding of Jerusalem by armies was so closely connected that Jesus' listeners should take action when they saw the armies around Jerusalem. That being the case, can we historically document the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies? We most certainly can.

Josephus, at length, explains that the Roman General Cestius brought a massive Roman army against Jerusalem. In his explanation of the event, Josephus further stated: "But now Cestius, observing that the disturbances that were begun among the Jews afforded him a proper opportunity to attack them, **took his whole army along with him, and put the Jews to flight and pursued them to Jerusalem.**"<sup>24</sup> The Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem as Jesus predicted.

The attentive reader will note that Jesus warned His listeners that when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then they should flee from the city (Luke 21:20-21). How would that be possible with the Roman army surrounding and besieging the city? Cestius' behavior provides one of the most remarkable instances of historic verification for any prophecy ever recorded. Jose-

phus noted that those in Jerusalem could not withstand the forces of Cestius. In fact, he stated that "had he but at this very time attempted to get within the walls by force, he had won the city presently, and the war had been put an end to at once."<sup>25</sup> But Cestius did not press his advantage. In fact, not only did he refuse to take the walls, he withdrew his entire army. The reader can almost hear Josephus' disgust as he wrote: "It then happened that Cestius was not conscious either how the besieged despaired of success, or how courageous the people were for him, and so he recalled his soldiers from the place, and by despairing of any expectation of taking it, without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, **without any reason in the world.**"<sup>26</sup>

From a military standpoint, Cestius' behavior was inexplicable. In his struggle to understand why the events occurred as they did, Josephus suggested that Cestius could have ended the war at that point, but the reason he did not, was "owing to the aversion God had already at the city and the sanctuary, that he was hindered from putting an end to the war that very day."<sup>27</sup> In other

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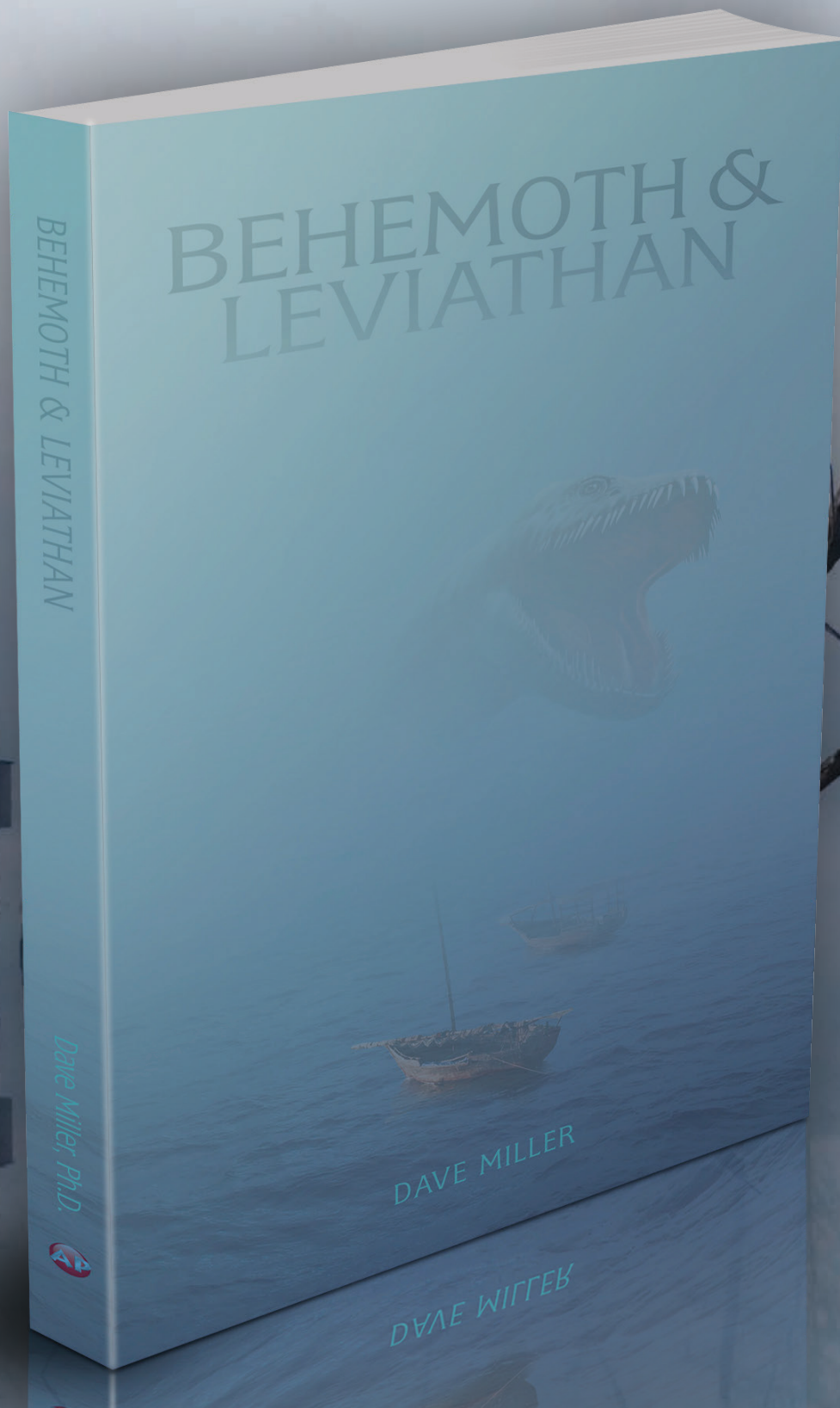
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words, God was not finished with His judgment of Jerusalem.

It is important to remember that Josephus was not a Christian and showed little, if any, awareness of the teachings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel accounts. He never considered these events to be fulfilled prophecy and never seemed to have been aware of Jesus' prediction warning His followers to flee Jerusalem. The reader is urged to remember this fact. Josephus was not inspired, nor was he attempting to validate the biblical account. Since the events he recorded are so clearly an exact fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, it is tempting to think that somehow he was "in league" with the Bible writers, but even the most liberal scholars and skeptics recognize that cannot be the case. Josephus saw absolutely no "reason in the world" that Cestius should have withdrawn his army. Those attending to Jesus' words, however, have an exceedingly good idea as to why this strange event occurred.

## 6. Flight of Christians from Jerusalem

Cestius' retreat provided the perfect opportunity for the Christians in Jerusalem to flee the city. Jesus had sternly warned them that when they saw the city surrounded by armies, to take no care about their earthly possessions, but run from the city for their lives. History records that they did precisely that. Church historian Eusebius wrote:

But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come there from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who committed such

outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men.<sup>28</sup>

Epiphanius, a fourth-century church writer, noted: "This sect of the Nazoraeans is to be found in Beroea near Coele-syria, in Decapolis near Pella.... For that was its place of origin, since all the disciples had settled in Pella, after their remove from Jerusalem—Christ having told them to abandon Jerusalem and withdraw from it because of the siege it was about to undergo."<sup>29</sup> Josephus mentioned that after Cestius' retreat many Jews "swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink."<sup>30</sup> He did not specifically mention Christians, but it is quite probable that many of those who fled at that time were followers of Christ.

## 7. Great Distress and Death in Jerusalem

Jesus warned His followers to leave Jerusalem because soon after the armies surrounded the city He predicted there would be "days of vengeance" and "great distress in the land and wrath upon this people" (Luke 21:22-23). Matthew recorded Jesus' foreboding description in these words: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (24:21). Some have questioned how Jerusalem would suffer more destruction, death, and horror than those in the Flood, or those during the time of the Holocaust. While it is possible that Jesus was using hyperbole, a look at the devastation brought upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70 reveals a period of pain, terror, and rapine that easily could be argued to surpass any in human history.

In the year A.D. 70, Roman general Titus besieged the city in an assault that would spell doom for Jerusalem. Not only did the siege begin to choke the food supplies,

but the problem was compounded by warring factions within the city. Josephus mentions three "armies" of zealots in the city that fought one another for control. One of their strategies was to burn the supplies of the other factions. The result of this was that the supply of corn that the inhabitants laid up for such a siege that could have sustained them for many years, was destroyed by the Jews themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, famine quickly took hold of the city—a famine so horrific that the details turn the stomach. The militant factions in the city marauded the streets, killing many and confiscating all food. "They also invented terrible methods of torment to discover where any food was, and they were these: to stop up the passages of the privy parts of the miserable wretches, and to drive sharp stakes up their fundamentals."<sup>32</sup> As the famine worsened "upper rooms were full of women and children that were dying by famine; and the lanes of the city were full of the dead bodies of the aged." The children and the young men "all swelled with famine, and fell down dead wheresoever their misery seized them."<sup>33</sup> One report before the entire ordeal was finished, said the number of dead from the famine was more than 600,000, with many dead bodies not even able to be counted.<sup>34</sup> So much so that "the multitude of carcasses that lay in heaps one upon another, was a horrible sight, and produced a pestilential stench."<sup>35</sup> As the famine continued, those dying ate the dead carcasses of animals, the leather off of their shoes, girdles, and shields, and old wisps of hay. Furthermore, in coming to an end of his description about the famine, Josephus related a story of a woman killing and roasting her son, eating half of it, and offering the other half to the marauders who came when they smelled cooking



flesh. They were so appalled by the sight that even they went out trembling.<sup>36</sup> The factions that caused the famine inside the city did so much destruction that Josephus said that a list of all the terrible things they did could not even be written, but because of these men “**neither did any city ever suffer such miseries,** nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world.”<sup>37</sup>

In relating further instances of suffering brought on the Jews in Jerusalem, we read that Romans were also responsible for immense amounts of cruelty. Concerning Jews that attempted to desert to the Romans, the Roman soldiers “out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to crosses, by way of jest.”<sup>38</sup> And many were “whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures before they died, and were then crucified.”<sup>39</sup> Other Jews that attempted to desert to the Romans met a more gruesome fate. Certain Jews coming out of the city had swallowed their gold in an attempt to hide it. Soldiers in the Roman army heard of this ploy and “cut up those that came as supplicants, and searched their bellies.” In one night, about 2,000 Jews were thus dissected.<sup>40</sup> Such instances could be multiplied extensively. In Josephus’ summary of the death and destruction of the Jews, he wrote that because the siege happened during the time of the Passover, millions of Jews from all over the world had congregated in the city. A final, estimated number of those killed in the few months of the siege was 1.1 million, with another 97,000 sold as prisoners (as Jesus stated in Luke 21:24, that not only would the inhabitants of Jerusalem be killed, but also “led away captive into all nations”).<sup>41</sup> Josephus lamented,

“Accordingly the multitude of those that therein perished **exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world.**”<sup>42</sup> Jesus’ description of great distress aptly expresses what horrors were experienced during the fall of Jerusalem.

## 8. The Destruction of the Physical Temple

When the disciples sat marveling at the “buildings of the temple,” they could not resist drawing Jesus’ attention to the architecture and magnificence of the structures. Surely they believed that the city and its buildings would continue through history. Imagine their surprise when Jesus declared and prophesied, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2). Is it true that the buildings of the Temple were destroyed as Jesus predicted?

Again, Josephus provides one of the only first-hand accounts of the destruction of the Temple by the Roman armies. He noted how the Roman soldiers “put fire to the gates, and the silver that was over them quickly carried the flames to the wood that was within it, whence it

spread itself all of the sudden, and caught hold of the cloisters.”<sup>43</sup> As for what was left of the Temple, he noted a Roman soldier “being lifted up by another soldier, set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side.” Josephus detailed how Titus tried to stop his soldiers from destroying the remainder of the building, but he was unsuccessful. And “flames burst out from within the holy house itself immediately...and thus the holy house burnt down.”<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the Temple itself was destroyed, but what about the stones of the “buildings of the temple”? To discover that information we must turn to archaeology. When we do, we find complete fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction. Archaeologist Harold Mare wrote: “We do not have any remains of the Herodian temple itself because of the devastating Roman destruction in A.D. 70.”<sup>45</sup> H.T. Frank noted, “Strictly speaking, the Temple proper is not a matter of archaeological consideration since only one stone from it and parts of another can be positively identified.”<sup>46</sup> Randall Price stated, “In fact, after the destruction of the Second Temple, the

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Romans plowed under the Temple Mount and erected pagan structures upon it (which themselves were later destroyed).<sup>47</sup>

### What about the Wailing Wall?

Not long ago I received an email from a skeptic who claimed that Jesus' prophecy had been falsified. He stated, "Jesus was flat wrong in saying not one stone will remain on top of another. The Wailing Wall is still there today." Supposedly, since the Western Wailing Wall existed during the time of Jesus, and since some stones are still intact, then Jesus' prediction that "not one stone shall be left here upon another" did not come true. Does the Wailing Wall disprove Jesus' prediction?

To discover the truth on this issue, I asked the skeptic to tell me "where, exactly did Jesus say that every stone in Jerusalem would be knocked down?" He then quoted Matthew 24:2, "And Jesus said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'" He said, because of the Wailing Wall, "So, I conclude Jesus was wrong and cannot be God's representative."

In response, I asked him, "Did you read the context of the passage? What had the disciples specifically asked Jesus about?" He wrote back and admitted that in Matthew 24 the disciples "wanted to draw Jesus' attention to the buildings of the temple."

Again, I responded by saying, "Looking closely at the context, could you tell me which buildings of the temple...the followers of Jesus were showing Him?" He stated, "I don't know. It doesn't say. I don't see what difference it would make as to which buildings, since Jesus says 'all these things' will not have one stone left upon another." When I asked him what he understood

"all these things" to mean, he said, "Jesus means the things to occur in the following verse 7."

I then recapped our conversation by pointing out that he first claimed that Jesus' statement about the stones in Jerusalem not being left one on another could not be true because there are stones in the Wailing Wall. Then when I asked if he had read the context, he admitted that Jesus was actually talking about the buildings of the Temple, which might not have had anything to do with the Wailing Wall. Then I asked him which buildings Jesus predicted would be destroyed, and he correctly stated that he did not know, since the text does not say.

I then asked about his understanding of "all these things," and he said it must be everything that follows in verse seven. Yet, a close look at the context shows that cannot be the case. Verse two is immediately connected to verse one and Jesus is specifically talking about the stones of the buildings of the Temple (whatever buildings His disciples were showing Him). Verse three starts a different discussion in a different location. Now, if we knew which buildings were under discussion in verse one, and we knew that some stones of **those** buildings were left, there might be a case against this prophecy (barring the frequent use of hyperbole, which does not seem to be used here, but is a possibility). But, of course, we do not know that. Furthermore, it is a historical fact that Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, and that destruction included vast numbers of buildings that were connected to the Temple that were completely demolished. Thus, the existence of some intact stones in the structures around Jerusalem cannot be used to logically argue against Jesus' prediction.

Jesus never predicted that every single stone in Jerusalem would

be displaced. He was specifically addressing those "buildings of the temple" that His disciples pointed out. Archaeologist Leen Ritmeyer wrote: "If you read the text in Matthew, the site [the disciples] pointed out were the buildings of the Temple. Read the exact text—'the buildings of the Temple.' The only buildings I know that belonged to the Temple were [those] built around it and the porticos. And all these buildings that stood on the Temple Mount were indeed left without one stone upon another."<sup>48</sup> Randall Price concluded, "Obviously Jesus was referring to those buildings (including the Temple itself) which were on the huge supporting platform.... Archaeology has confirmed that no trace of these Temple buildings exists today, although some of their stones may have been put to secondary use in the walls and homes in Old City Jerusalem. Nevertheless, none remain in their original setting."<sup>49</sup> Indeed, the attempt to discredit Jesus by pointing to the Wailing Wall falls down as flat as the buildings surrounding the Temple during the destruction of Jerusalem.

### CONCLUSION

Jesus' disciples boldly declared that they saw His miracles and were eyewitnesses to His marvelous works (1 John 1:1-3; 2 Peter 1:16-18). They recorded His prediction that He would be arrested, killed, and rise again (Matthew 16:21)—events about which they had first-hand knowledge. Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem, however, was set for a time in the future after Jesus ascended to heaven, but during the lifetime of many of His hearers. His primary purposes for the predictions were to warn His followers when to flee Jerusalem, as well as to add further proof for His divinity by providing yet another example of His ability to foresee the



future. The historical record verifies that Jesus' prophecy was so detailed and accurate that, after all the signs He predicted occurred, and His followers saw "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" (Luke 21:20), they knew exactly what to do in order to avoid the fate of the wicked Jews who refused to recognize Jesus as God. Even so, Jesus has predicted another future event, His Second Coming, which will be Universal in its scope. Concerning this event, there will be no signs that enable anyone to predict when it will occur.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, it will come with no warning or announcements, like a thief in the night (Matthew 24:43). As surely and as accurately as Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem, He has foretold His Second Coming and the Judgment of all humanity. Let us all heed His words: "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:37).

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 5:5:6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 5:4:4.

<sup>3</sup> Tacitus, *Histories*, 5:11.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 21:5-24 and Mark 13:3-23 provide parallel accounts to these events in Matthew. Some have suggested that these accounts discuss the Second Coming of Christ and the events that will precede the end of the world. The clearest facts that show this cannot be true are seen in Jesus' references to the hardships that would be experienced by pregnant women (Matthew 24:18-19), that the situation would be worse if it happened during the winter (vs. 20), that those outside the city or on their housetops should not expend any effort to get their earthly belongings (vs. 20), and that those "in Judea" should flee to the mountains (Luke 21:20). When Christ comes again, none of these precautions will have any bearing or significance. For a more thorough discussion, see Dave Miller (2014), "Left Behind—Or Left Bedazzled?" *Reason & Revelation*, 34[11-12]:121-125, 128-131, 133-137, 140-143, November, [http://](http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1176)

[apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1176](http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1176).

<sup>5</sup> While some interpreters have attempted to mark Jesus' statements in Matthew 24:1-35 as predictions about the end of time, the context precludes this as a legitimate option. In Matthew 23:36, Jesus explained to the audience that Jerusalem's judgment would "come upon this generation" and in Matthew 24:34, He again stated, "this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled." Skeptics have seized upon the statements of those who teach that Jesus was predicting end times and claim that since the world did not come to an end during the lifetime of Jesus' listeners (the term "generation" being generally understood to be about 40 years), then Jesus was wrong and could not be the Son of God. These skeptics and errant biblical interpreters fail to recognize that Jesus specifically detailed events in Jerusalem, regarding the physical city and Temple, and the area of Judea, that could not be universal in scope. On the contrary, Jesus clearly predicted situations that His disciples could watch that would help them know exactly when Jerusalem would be destroyed.

<sup>6</sup> All emphasis in biblical quotes or historical quotations has been added by the author of the article unless otherwise noted.

<sup>7</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20:5:1.

<sup>8</sup> *Jewish Wars*, 2:13:4.

<sup>9</sup> *Antiquities*, 20:9:6.

<sup>10</sup> *Jewish Wars*, 2:13:5.

<sup>11</sup> *Antiquities*, 20:8:5.

<sup>12</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1:57, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 6:11 <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/04166.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> Tacitus, *Histories*, 1:2.

<sup>15</sup> *Annals*, 12:43-44.

<sup>16</sup> *Annals*, 16:13.

<sup>17</sup> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, 5:18.

<sup>18</sup> *Antiquities*, 20:2:5.

<sup>19</sup> Seneca the Younger, *Natural Questions*, 6:1:2.

<sup>20</sup> *Annals*, 15:22:2. J. Antonopoulos documents other seismic events during these years in his 1980 work, "Data From Investigation on Seismic Sea-waves and Events in the Eastern Mediterranean from the Birth of Christ to 500 A.D.", <http://www.annalsofgeophysics.eu/index.php/annals/article/view/4701>.

[annalsofgeophysics.eu/index.php/annals/article/view/4701](http://www.annalsofgeophysics.eu/index.php/annals/article/view/4701).

<sup>21</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, 2:25:5-8, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> *The Twelve Caesars*, 6:16.

<sup>23</sup> *Annals*, 15:44.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 2:19:4.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 2:19:7.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2:19:6.

<sup>28</sup> *Church History*, 3.5.3, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> Epiphanius, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, ed. Frank Williams, *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies*, [https://gnosis.study/library/%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0/ENG/Epiphanius%20of%20Salamis%20-%20The%20Panarion,%20Book%20I%20\(Sects%201-46\).pdf](https://gnosis.study/library/%D0%9A%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0/ENG/Epiphanius%20of%20Salamis%20-%20The%20Panarion,%20Book%20I%20(Sects%201-46).pdf), 29.7.7-8, p.129.

<sup>30</sup> *Wars*, 2:20:1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 5:1:4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 5:10:3.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 5:12:3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 5:13:7.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 6:1:1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 6:3:4.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 5:10:5.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 5:11:1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 5:11:1.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 5:13:4.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 6:9:3.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 6:9:4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 6:4:2.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 6:4:6-7.

<sup>45</sup> Harold Mare (1987), *The Archaeology of the Jerusalem Area* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 141.

<sup>46</sup> H.T. Frank (1972), *An Archaeological Companion to the Bible* (London: SCM Press), p. 249.

<sup>47</sup> Randall Price (1997), *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House), pp. 257-258.

<sup>48</sup> As quoted in Price, p. 257.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Miller.



## NOTE FROM *The Editor*



### New Book: *Behemoth & Leviathan*

For over 40 years, Apologetics Press has been defending the biblical view of Creation in opposition to the evolutionary framework. We have consistently contended that humans and dinosaurs co-existed from the very beginning of Creation prior to the extinction of the dinosaurs. (See our powerful book: *The Dinosaur Delusion*.) Since these stupendous animals once lived on Earth, many have wondered why the Bible doesn't mention them—given their prominence. Apart from the fact that expecting the Bible to refer to any number of animal species is an unrealistic imposition of personal bias on the text, the fact of the matter is: **the Bible does, in fact, allude to dinosaur and dinosaur-like creatures.**

Job was an actual historical personage who lived over 3,500 years ago. His intense suffering evoked a response from God that was intended to awaken Job to the wonders of the created order that, in turn, testify to the living God Who created all things. Those wonders included two awesome creatures,

undoubtedly now extinct, one of which clearly fits the description of a land-dwelling dinosaur and the other an unsurpassed aquatic creature. AP's newly released *Behemoth & Leviathan* walks the reader through the biblical text's description of these incredible beasts to recognize that they were not "mythological," and the accounts are not "hyperbolic." These literal creatures once lived on Earth. They continue to testify to the marvelous Creator Who made them.

This volume will increase your confidence in the Bible, aid you in convincing young people about the truth of the dinosaurs, and enhance your respect for God.

Dave Miller



Suitable for classroom use  
with 180 review questions

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